

a brother-sister team are walking away  
from the sunset, hustling balloons  
tied up on a five-foot stick  
like two trolls going to repair a rainbow.  
The balloons have tails tied  
out of top-secret printouts,  
hot off the printers at MAVC  
with secrets that were printed in Newsweek  
two editions ago and the whole  
balloon tree is only fifty cents PMC.  
I take their picture walking in the mud  
with the fading day at their backs  
and the rainbow on their shoulders.

It's Flo's birthday so I buy the whole bunch.  
Fifty cents — they screwed me and they knew it.  
They screwed me and I didn't care.  
After all, I got the picture.  
I bring them home to Flo and I get Flo's smile.  
I take another picture of Flo in the back  
yard, under the banana tree and the cistern,  
making the peace sign with a rainbow on her shoulder.

Not a bad night in hell —  
the kids made their fortune,  
Flo is all smiles and balloons,  
I'll get lucky in bed —

rainbows out of mud.

— Michael Andrews

Hermosa Beach CA

#### STAMPED OBJECTS

My father's letters come on old scraps  
Of paper. He cuts them neatly so they're squared.  
They're fragments of everydayness. From dog-eared  
Paperbacks he recycles end sheets and clips  
The edges. A place mat gets a second life.  
Or a wrapper is folded over, slit with knife,  
Carefully smoothed out, and once more wraps

Up something. These homemade letters arrive about  
Once every two months. My father says that writing  
Is soporific, and I can see him fidgeting,  
Moving his pen in spirals to get the ideas out  
(Where there's pen and ink there must be words)  
And finally getting his thoughts to flow towards  
What will be this or that paternal point.



Once flowing, the sentences go wall to wall,  
My father carpeting the entire page —  
No margins — perfectly tacking down the message.  
(Both workmanlike and eco-amicable.)  
Lately, the print has grown larger. My father's eyes  
Are weakening, and he has ballooned the size  
Of his edifying words to make them legible.

Chilling. Little by little everything goes.  
I try to put this out of mind, but then  
I can't — not quite.... My father's retired ten  
Years now. He putters, paints, refinishes  
Furniture. Works in the garden. Takes drives.  
Watches TV. Walks. Cuts grass. Rakes leaves.  
Shovels away the snow. So his letters disclose.

What are letters really? Communication?  
Yes. Transfers of fact? Also. But more —  
They are things we make for one another.  
Stamped objects. Friendly fabrication.  
We keep them. They are the houses of our thought.  
These are the letters that my father built  
From everyday facts and the heart's creation.

#### SILVER

The card table is what first comes to mind.  
It was set up in the corner next to the bookcase.  
The surface, bowed a little, was scuffed and lined.  
A small door leading into the storage space  
Had been cut out of the pale sideboard wall.  
If one leaned back on the card table chair  
A little too far, one tapped the knob. I recall  
As well a Webster's in disrepair.  
Its spine was held together with masking tape.  
One of the foldings in the A's was loose.  
The thumb index that descended step by step  
Down the edge had been scraped goldless.  
The lamp on the table had a green shade  
And a brass stand. Click! A September night  
Twenty-five years ago. Each word weighed,  
I composed my first poems under its light.

— Michael Fessler

Kawasaki Japan